Enhancing Livelihoods and the Urban Environment: The Local Political Framework for Integrated Organic Waste Management in Diadema, Brazil

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ABSTRACT   *Drawing on a participatory study of integrated organic waste management, this article explores the local political barriers and preconditions for its implementation in Diadema, Brazil. Solid waste management in Brazil is embedded in and mediated by a political framework that is characterised by uneven power geometries. This article explores how the local political context affects the potential for integrated organic waste management in Diadema, paying particular attention to relations between stakeholders. The discussion addresses the contested nature of deliberative decision-making spaces and the need for pro-active socio-environmental policies. The findings underline the importance of a praxis of everyday public participation that goes beyond rhetoric.*

I. Introduction

Participatory integrated organic waste management (IOWM) re-circulates the value in household organic waste by combining inclusive decentralised collection with composting and urban agriculture.[1] Organic waste is collected and redirected by autonomous groups of recyclers (who are organised in associations or cooperatives), and then processed by urban gardeners for application to agricultural soils. Participatory IOWM is defined by the integration of multiple practical options for one type of waste, but also includes the integration of informative, economic, and regulatory mechanisms, which are implemented by different agents, such as government and non-government bodies (Seadon, 2006). Participatory IOWM can help enhance local food security and build a form of community (or solidarity) economy. In 2008 a study was carried out as an extension of the existing Participatory Sustainable Waste Management (PSWM) project[2] to explore

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the socio-political viability of IOWM in Diadema, Brazil. Currently, there is no formal selective collection of organic waste in the São Paulo region (within which Diadema is located), and the study is unique in its advancement of strategies and policies for organic waste management. The study was a collaboration with the city's recycling programme *Vida Limpa* (Clean Life), recycling association *Pacto Ambiental* (Environmental Pact), gardeners at the community garden of *Fundação Centro de Atendimento Socioeducativo ao Adolescente* (CASA), local community residents, and local government. The study was carried out prior to the September 2008 local elections, which, despite the continuation of a *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT – Workers' Party) government, created political uncertainty. Drawing on empirical evidence from Diadema, this article places IOWM into the dynamic local political context, and explores the potential for a consistent and supportive policy framework in the city.

The Federal Constitution of 1988 set the legal agenda for more inclusive urban development in Brazil and was reinforced by the City Statute in 2001, which 'indicated several processes for municipalities to integrate urban planning, legislation, and management so as to democratize the local decision-making process and thus legitimize a new, socially oriented urban–legal order' (Fernandes, 2007: 182). The result was a proliferation of participatory approaches in Brazil, such as the participatory budget (*orçamento participativo*) and participatory policy councils (*conselhos deliberativos*) (Caldeira and Holston, 2005). Meanwhile, the pro-poor policies of the PT have helped to agglomerate a group of loyal supporters (*petistas*) which has set the party apart from every other political institution in the fragmented and unstable Brazilian party system (Samuels, 2008; Zucco, 2008).[3] Cities such as Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte have become flagship examples of how participation can extend beyond traditional unions to include the poor (Baiocchi, 2005). In the São Paulo region, two thirds of civil organisations working with popular sectors are involved in new participatory institutional arrangements (Lavalle, Houtzager and Castello, 2005), and the municipality of Diadema has gained recognition for its encouragement of popular participation (Fernandes, 2007). Urban citizenship in the metropolitan region has supposedly been reinvigorated through municipal autonomy and innovative municipal codes for public participation, and by a concomitant struggle for self-management (*auto-gestão*) (Caldeira and Holston, 2005; Gutberlet, 2008b).

However, the participatory, bottom-up social policies of the PT stand in contrast to the simultaneous privatisation of public services and lack of commitment in policy enforcement at the local level. Waste transportation and processing is increasingly carried out by third party service providers, while support for agro-industry has proliferated at the expense of local food producers and in direct opposition to social policies such as the *Fome Zero* (Zero Hunger) programme (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2005; Paiva, 2006). The National Plan for the Production of Biodiesel (*Plano Nacional de Produção e Uso de Biodiesel* – PNPB), for example, has prompted small-scale farmers to turn to monocrops for biodiesel production, drawing resources away from the production of food for local markets (Rocha, 2009). This article explores how the local implementation of PT policies affects IOWM as a community-driven initiative. In so doing, the article primarily draws on the experiences of two groups: a network of recyclers organised into cooperatives and associations, which is forging a

new form of economy based on values of social equality and solidarity; and, community gardeners, who are reclaiming derelict and under-used land for productive purposes. The article analyses the policy context in Diadema, and explores some reforms required to build a supportive environment for IOWM. Evidence was gathered through the analysis of participant observation notes, minutes and notes from 11 (formal and informal) deliberative meetings, and nine in-depth interviews, carried out in 2008. Critical content and discourse analysis reveals how the language of local politics is a situated social practice that perpetuates and reproduces political domination.

II. Conceptualising Political Frameworks for Integrated Organic Waste Management

Urban livelihoods are determined by their context, by social, political, and economic forces that constrain or enable access to and usability of resources (Scoones, 1998). Urban livelihoods based on waste-as-a-resource are not somehow external to institutional settings, but are embedded within locally contingent institutional dynamics, as the empirical case in this article reveals. According to Cofie et al. (2006: 216) 'a common problem leading to project failure is poor co-ordination among institutions and stakeholders due to weak institutional linkages and the lack of an enabling institutional framework, including clear legislation and policies'. Yet their framework for a nutrient-recycling loop, explored through empirical studies in Ghana (Duran Jr. et al., 2006) and the Philippines (Adam-Bradford, 2006), merely presents the logistical and planning capabilities of local institutions, and does not address the uneven nature of decision-making processes within and between stakeholder institutions. This is a general weakness across the waste management literature, and an approach is required that addresses uneven decision-making processes and enhances the democratic content of urban environments by supporting strategies that aim for a more equitable distribution of social power and political decision-making (Heynen et al., 2006). In this article, the notion of deliberative democracy is used as a lens for examining the everyday politics of IOWM in Diadema.

Deliberative policy-making facilitates a bottom-up process of producing more equitable urban environments, as it re-prioritises popular democracy over elite democracy (Foweraker, 2001) and helps to re-embed community control (Craig and Porter, 2006). Deliberation involves a re-politicisation of development, which overcomes the reticence of governments and establishes political frameworks that support the bottom-up construction of sustainable communities. Such frameworks foster effective participation and 'positive interplay between government commitment, civic virtues, and supportive institutional design' (Schönleitner, 2006: 35). According to Coelho and Favareto (2008: 2939), 'by giving a voice to groups who have traditionally been marginalised and by encouraging participation, negotiation, and cooperation between various social segments, the trust and coordination between them would be increased, which in turn would contribute to the promotion of development projects that coincide with their needs'. In this context, political participation is understood within a nexus of civil and political society, and Lavalle, Houtzager and Acharya (2005) advocate for an approach that focuses on the interdependent and contested relationship between political behaviour and civic sense, as

well as on the embedded and complex nature of power within civil and political society (Jones, 2003). Conceptually, this reflects Jürgen Habermas' model of a public realm of action, which overlaps with the separate realms of the state and private capital to create a deliberative public space that is characterised by associative democracy rather than coercion or manipulation (Gutberlet, 2008b). In deliberative space, 'each is accountable to all ... deliberation widens the scope of accountability to a broader "moral constituency", transcending geographical boundaries, classes, and interest groups' (Schönleitner, 2006: 41–42). Within deliberative space, citizenship is based not on belonging to an existing political system, but 'upon the right to participate in its redefinition' (Goirand, 2003: 243).

However, the particular form of deliberative space is not universal. In the São Paulo region, the poor obtain different levels of representation according to different strategic roles that determine the design, inclusiveness, and democratic qualities of the space (Coelho and Favareto, 2008; Lavalle, Houtzager and Acharya, 2005). According to Schönleitner (2004, 2006), true bottom-up political transformation in Brazil via deliberative forums is only possible where a vibrant civil society is supported by a progressive civil–political society matrix based on active inclusion. Local political agency, formal party politics, political culture and ideologies, degrees of inclusiveness and power redistribution, and the cultural propensity to challenge power are all important in determining the extent to which deliberative space can become an effective democratic force (Cornwall, 2007; Gutberlet, 2008b; Schönleitner, 2004). In Brazil, fragmentation between institutions, participatory spaces, and policies is often a barrier (Coelho and Favareto, 2008), and according to Petts (2005) this has often been the case when deliberative decision-making has been applied to waste management. Indeed, Gutberlet (2008b) explored the notion of active citizenship in the context of the organisation of the recyclers (*catadores*) in Brazil, and revealed the hindrance of repressive structures of government that remain controlled by elitist institutions operating on a basis of clientelism. Similar barriers have been identified in relation to informal recycling in India, where patronage networks and caste relations determine the ability of the poor to influence policy (Gill, 2010). However, the approach taken here differs from Gill's (2010) assessment of how marginalised recyclers *react* to the state, as we explore the extent to which marginalised groups *co-produce* local political conditions for the implementation of more equitable socio-environmental policies. While recyclers in Brazil are extremely marginalised, they do not suffer from the structural discrimination that the caste system in India perpetuates, and the current political context in Brazil actively promotes the role of marginalised populations in shaping policy developments.

The issue for establishing a facilitative framework for IOWM, then, is how to organise community-driven processes that seek to appropriate a political space that is currently dominated by formal political institutions and the clientelism that is specific to local Brazilian contexts. For Lefebvre, this dilemma reflects a conflict between domination and appropriation, 'a dialectical contradiction ... [that] presupposes unity as well as confrontation' (Lefebvre, 1991: 392). Such a dialectic permeates deliberative processes in Brazil; rather than being the reasoned space for dialogue that is often theorised, deliberative space is defined by passionate, combative, and agonistic politics (Cornwall, 2007). Deliberative space, therefore, is highly politicised, and contestation shapes and defines democracy within the space.

Understanding the nature of facilitative political frameworks for IOWM, therefore, becomes a matter of discerning the interactions and power geometries within and between institutions. Focus here is on the routine processes that constitute deliberative decision-making in Diadema. Deliberative space consists of the informal discussions, the meetings, and the ideologies that define the interaction between political and civil society; between the recyclers' organisations, community gardeners, and local government. Emphasis on what Lefebvre (1991) calls the 'everyday' reveals how political context and political ideology feeds into policy practice at the local level, and helps to expose what Heynen (2006: 139) refers to as the 'unimaginative political processes that tolerate urban inequality'.

III. Policy Context in Diadema

Diadema has spent the majority of the past three decades under the control of the PT, indicating the left-leaning nature of politics and society in the municipality. With a PT stronghold in Diadema, the election of Lula in 2002 sparked a wave of progressive policy reforms, and the municipality is now cited as a model for participatory and deliberative policy-making procedures. As a representative from the *Departamento de Abastecimento Público* (Department of Public Provisions, henceforth *Abastecimento Público*) put it, Diadema is 'a municipal administration [that has] a politics towards the community ... like many municipal councils ... that are the tools for popular participation'. Such a community-focused politics has fed into policy formulation for waste management. Since 2002, the Diadema government has been working with the city's *catadores de lixo* (waste collectors), and in 2004 the municipality formally recognised the *programa Vida Limpa* (Gutberlet, 2008b). *Vida Limpa* is a city-wide programme established with the recyclers' association *Pacto Ambiental*, a Civil Society Organisation of Public Interest (*Organização da Sociedade Civil de Interesse Público*, OSCIP) that redistributes capital surplus according to the social objectives in its mandate (articles 1–5 of *Lei 9,790/99* – Federal law 9,790). In 2005 the municipality signed a partnership memorandum with *Pacto Ambiental* and became the first municipality to support informal recyclers with an official policy of remuneration, which in 2008 stood at 38 *reais* (US $16) per ton of recyclable waste diverted from landfill (Gutberlet, 2008a). In 2008, there were six fully functional *postos de entrega* (collection depots), including *Posto do Centro* (established in 2007), which provided the infrastructure and capacity for the study of IOWM. *Catadores* from each *posto* collect material on a door-to-door basis according to established catchment areas, and transport the material to the *posto* via hand-drawn carts, where it is separated, quantified, and processed. Quantification determines remuneration from government, while the processed material is sold to market intermediaries or – less frequently – directly to industry. Not all recyclers favour collective organisation, and some are sceptical of organisations such as *Vida Limpa* due to a perceived lack of managerial transparency. Independent informal recyclers operate in parallel to recyclers' organisations, and usually operate in different catchment areas. The availability of vast quantities of waste in the São Paulo region means that conflict between recyclers is minimal and recycling organisations have provided assistance to

informal recyclers when necessary (such as the provision of food and water, help in transporting heavy loads etc.).

The municipal government is also proactive in its policies aimed at enhancing food security. In 2003, Diadema established *CONSEAD* (the Diadema Council on Food Security) to operate within the national *Fome Zero* programme, a strategy to ensure the human right to adequate nutrition for people with difficult food access (Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome, undated). *CONSEAD* established *bancos de alimentos* (food banks) and a *restaurante popular* (people's restaurant), which helped provide 900,000kg of food to approximately 15,000 people in 2006. The municipality also enacted a land and citizenship project to help resurrect a culture of agriculture and transform idle urban space into productive agricultural land. As a result, a network of *hortas comunitarias* (community gardens) has emerged in the city, supported by *Abastecimento Público*. Community gardens are public urban agriculture plots under the management of local residents, rather than local government. While the gardens may be located on public (municipal) land and while the local government provides assistance (whether at start-up or later through capacity building), the gardens are open to public involvement, and gardeners form into groups to manage both the land and food distribution. Food is usually consumed by the groups and their families, while surplus is directed to supporting community members and institutions (for example, schools that provide land) or to markets.

Although Diadema has emerged as a progressive municipality of Brazil, the turmoil of party politics and coalitions in Brazil results in chronic instability, particularly during election periods when the enforcement of government legislation rapidly disintegrates. Research conducted in the Brazilian city of Ribeirão Pires revealed that recycling groups experience many setbacks during pre-election and post-election periods (Gutberlet, 2008a). In the case of the *Vida Limpa* programme, political instability resulted in a year-long freezing of remuneration payments, thereby temporarily eliminating a source of income for the recyclers. As a result, fewer recyclers were willing to carry out waste separation and the redirection of the recyclable material to intermediaries or industry, and many returned to independent informal collection. Local residents grew intolerant of the piling material, and in January 2009, *Posto do Centro* was destroyed by a fire that local PSWM staff believe was ignited by the residents. In the aftermath of the fire, the municipal government continued to fail in policy enforcement and offered little support to the programme. In late 2008 and early 2009, five fires destroyed four recycling depots in the São Paulo metropolitan region. All of the depots lacked sufficient support from the municipality to re-build their operations, and remain vulnerable due to their inability to acquire status as a social cooperative. Social cooperatives are governed by a different law to OSCIPs (*lei 10,406/02* of the 2002 Civil Code), which allows them to generate profits. However, the process of becoming a cooperative is bureaucratic and requires fees; often groups of informal workers are unable to meet these requirements.

The situation is similar for community gardeners, as a lack of collective organisation leaves them vulnerable to insecure land tenure arrangements. As a representative from *Abastecimento Público* explained, 'all the projects are in public areas. The city has no intention of giving the land to the people; they can only use

the land for urban agriculture'. The recognition of land tenure rights for production is not currently placed within the broader, multi-sectoral processes of urban policy in the Constitution, and is poorly enforced as an isolated policy (Fernandes, 2002). Should there be a shift in political emphasis away from *Fome Zero*, for example towards the further construction of housing nuclei to relieve over-crowded slums, the municipality possesses the power and right to retract their land offerings so as to meet housing objectives. Without legal protection, community gardeners are disempowered in the legal fight for land-use rights against local residents seeking to expand informal settlements. In Diadema, insecure tenure has led to continuous conflict with local residents, such as at *Jardim Santa Elizabeth* where residents in the neighbouring slum settlement adopted aggressive tactics of destroying crops and contaminating soils to force gardeners off the land and make it available for informal housing development. This conflict relates to the widespread phenomenon of illegally claiming land at the periphery or metropolitan São Paulo. With extreme pressure on and demand for land in Diadema, local elites appropriate informal settlements and offer protection and safe living conditions to residents in exchange for support and/or votes. Similarly illegal land speculation occurs as real estate agents claim and sell land before disappearing once the transaction is complete (Gutberlet and Hunter, 2008). Thus, the municipal government is under extreme pressure to find available land and provide affordable housing, which makes the tenure of community gardens extremely precarious without the sufficient legal support.

IV. The Everyday Politics of Implementing Integrated Organic Waste Management

Given the policy context above, this section reveals the local political potential and constraints for implementing IOWM. In exploring local-scale politics, this section helps to explain why initiatives such as IOWM and organisations such as *Vida Limpa* often struggle, despite being environmentally, socially, and politically desirable in a time of economic crisis and environmental concern.

The Need for Progressive Inter-disciplinary Policy Formation

Interviews revealed that municipal representatives conceived waste management as environmental policy, and urban agriculture and food security in terms of social policy. Although this may reflect a division of labour within municipal government, a lack of horizontal cooperation within government is often detrimental to the development and enforcement of progressive policies (Gutberlet, 2008b). There was a degree of recognition for the need for progressive coalitions between social and environmental policy makers, and between programmes such as *Fome Zero* (Zero Hunger) and *Meu Ambiente: Diadema Cuidando do Planeta* (My Environment: Diadema Taking Care of the Planet). However, this was usually couched in a rhetoric of problem displacement. For example, when asked how community gardens could contribute to improved waste management and the *Limpeza Urbana* (Urban Clean-up) programme, the director of *Limpeza Urbana* responded that it was an issue for *Abastecimento Público* and not of his concern. This refusal to think across established departmental lines presents a barrier to progressive

inter-disciplinary policy-making; despite recognising 'the value that exists in doing this marriage between the social and environmental' (representative of *Departamento de Habitação* – Department of Housing, henceforth *Habitação*), there is a lack of action on the ground to realise this value in practice. For example, the three government departments of *Habitação, Limpeza Urbana*, and *Abastecimento Público* all gave their rhetorical commitment to IOWM. However, 'overly extensive bureaucratic procedures prone to rivalry' (Gutberlet, 2008a: 661) created political barriers to addressing social and technical aspects. Responsibility for providing the promised collection cart was initially transferred between departments via problem displacement, and was only taken once personal political prowess had been enhanced through association with the project. Photos were taken of a municipal representative participating in the project and dressed in a *Vida Limpa* uniform, thereby allowing the representative to claim ownership of the project for political gain. While this may appear to be a common publicity stunt, the importance lies in the fact that the relationships are personalised, *continuous*, and informally reciprocal, which according to Keefer (2005: 7) are 'characteristics sufficient for reputational equilibria to exist in a non-cooperative game'. According to the *catadores*, such incidences reflect a long-standing political relationship with municipal representatives, who continuously appropriate *Vida Limpa* gains for their own benefit.

Although the collection cart example did not create an impassable barrier to the pilot, the process is indicative of a political culture that is characterised by pluralistic reciprocal arrangements and the cultural phenomenon of *jeitinho* (or *jeito*). In Brazil, *jeitinho* is colloquially referred to as 'the Brazilian way' and has been defined within academia as a way of using one's informal social or personal resources to accomplish goals within formal political spheres as well as informal realms (Barbosa, 1995). *Jeitinho* is a universal phenomenon that involves personal and non-monetary exchange, in contrast to corruption, which relates to illegal and monetary personal exchange (Vieira, 2008). To 'give' or 'receive' a *jeito* there is a set of 'rules' that everyone must follow, and it is the way in which the individual pursues *jeitinho* that is fundamental to its success (Barbosa, 1995). Those traditionally marginalised from decision-making must quickly learn how to utilise their social assets so as to effectively deploy *jeitinho* within decision-making scenarios. 'For the Brazilian poor', Neuhouser (2008: 149) explains, 'survival requires incredible creativity in the art of *jeito*'. Similarly, Vieira (2008) concludes that *jeitinho* has become a social requirement in overcoming the bureaucratic hurdles of everyday life, such as the patrimonialism and clientelism inherited from colonialism. Although *jeitinho* reflects Gill's (2010: 85) 'sufficient condition for the exercise of power', power is sanctioned according to norms and conditions specific to Brazilian culture and particular localities. Just as patronage regimes based on caste relations affect the place-specific implementation of policies in Delhi (Gill, 2010), so *jeitinho* produces the locally contingent political frameworks that are exemplified in the case of IOWM in Diadema.

Thus, while *jeitinho* does not imply a hierarchy between its respective users, the pilot study exposed the phenomenon as an uneven socio-political drama played out by the well-connected and powerful actor on the one hand, and the marginalised, less powerful actor on the other. Although *jeitinho* is not necessarily a resource for the powerful to impose such a hierarchy (Hess and DaMatta, 1995), its effective

deployment does depend on a set of learned social skills. The deployment of *jeitinho* within uneven political scenarios means that 'it contributes to the reproduction of hierarchy and personalism' (Hess and DaMatta, 1995: 31). The result for *Vida Limpa* is resentment of local government, as they deem certain representatives as untrustworthy. The visit of municipal representatives to *Vida Limpa postos* prompts a vivid transformation of *catadores* from their usually engaged, mobilised, and positive attitudes, to the timid and silenced attitudes associated with municipal interaction.

Symbolic Public Participation

The interviews with municipal representatives revealed a strong presence of the PT themes of public participation and social mobilisation, with over a third (36.55%) of the coded interview content relating to such:

> Selective collection does not depend solely on the catadores; it depends on the quantity of mobilisation of the population.
>
> (*Secretária de Comunicação* – Secretary of Communication)

> The municipality must not treat the population as if they are [trained] seals ... We should develop in them their critical thinking ... a fundamental aspect is when it comes to working with the population, working with these issues so that people can make the changes in the way they act.
>
> (Representative of *Habitação*)

> It is all about awareness. This is where I encounter most difficulties in the work: it is precisely this, to convince the people. Here in Diadema ... peoples' awareness is the problem. The people do not have that culture, you know?
>
> (Representative of *Limpeza Urbana*)

For the PT, the recognition that social mobilisation is fundamental to the successful implementation of socio-environmental projects is an important one, as the party places emphasis on the ability of public participation to influence decision-making processes:

> if there is an area where there is now a garden, and it is being very well developed – the community is going there to buy food, and if everybody is happy – no mayor will have the courage to come and say 'no, we will take it away from here' ... So, it's a bit of a characteristic of this popular democratic government, right. The people, they have a little bit of power of decision ... There are some governors [and governments] that don't give this space to the community.
>
> (Representative of *Abastecimento Público*)

However, mobilising civic engagement is not straightforward and the process is mediated by socio-cultural values and existing power dynamics. The comment made by the representative of the *Limpeza Urbana* programme that 'the people do not have

the culture' reflects the need for an abstract ideological transformation among the population in order to conceive the benefits of socio-environmental change. In the context of local food production, representatives from *Abastecimento Público* recognised that a culture of agricultural production and composting does not exist in Brazilian cities:

> The people who live here in Diadema, they focus on what is work for them: working in industry or in commerce ... Diadema is a town where people have their heads in [the] urban ... people do not give the minimum importance to the compost, the same way as it was with the community vegetable gardens ... It is the product of the city.

The perspectives of the municipal representatives also reflect the political culture of problem displacement that exists within local government. Municipal representatives frequently cited an inability or reluctance amongst the population as a barrier to effective waste management, food security, or other community development projects. There was a persistent 'othering' of the population, as they were presented as uneducated and disengaged from environmentally sustainable alternatives, despite local residents being optimistic and pro-active in relation to selective waste collection and the notion of IOWM. For example, residents described the notion of re-using organic material as 'our citizen's duty for our own good and the environment', and that such projects 'are great for the planet, and the future of our grandchildren'. Such perceptions contradict the value-laden assertions of the municipal representatives cited above, which portray the residents as lacking the 'culture' of organic waste re-use for urban agriculture (UA).

Nonetheless, as the representative of *Habitação* pointed out, there remains a need to develop a critical sense among the population. While the local population voiced pro-environmental values, recyclers complained that 'not all the households helped [to provide organic waste], in the same way that not all the households helped with [inorganic] solid [waste separation]'. Similarly, the community gardeners were frustrated by 'a lack of interest of many that don't want to work'. Differing conceptions of the value of urban agriculture and selective waste collection have extended beyond such a lack of interest to active resentment. Due to hostility and verbal abuse from certain households, the *catadores* at *Posto do Centro* only collect material from households they know are sympathetic to their cause. Unsympathetic residents portrayed their resentment by burning recycling depots across the São Paulo region. Similarly, some of the gardeners at *Jardim Santa Elizabeth* abandoned production and vacated the land due to the frequent violent tactics (such as uprooting crops and contaminating land) of local residents wanting to expand their informal settlement due to a lack of available space and affordable housing. According to representatives of *Abastecimento Público*, other gardens have failed at their inception due to similar opposition from local residents of low-cost and/or informal settlements. Residents perceived agriculture as the labour of the countryside open to displacement by urban development, whether formal or informal.

To help recyclers and community gardeners in the face of such adversity, municipal decision makers place faith in increasing their organisational capacity. According to a representative of *Abastecimento Público*, community gardeners in

Diadema are encouraged to organise themselves into cooperatives to facilitate collective bargaining and the commercialisation of their products. The municipality then lends support to these organised groups through capacity building initiatives, described as capacity building 'as they go' (*Abastecimento Público* representative), which is designed to evolve according to the emerging and developing needs of the community. Staff at *Fundação CASA* welcomed such capacity building and encouraged the creation of community garden cooperatives to enhance the self-esteem and income of community gardeners. The *Secretária de Comunicação*, meanwhile, explained the importance of organising informal recyclers:

> We started organising these recyclers ... they were trained and one cooperative was formed. This started the *Vida Limpa* project ... It started with one depot ... for families from Diadema who lived at Alvarenga [landfill]. Then they received a subsidy; they received welfare from the City to help them sustain themselves. Then this project *Vida Limpa* started to grow ... Today we have six depots in the entire city; I think there are 70-ish recyclers ... Today, they are super well organised ... They are people that left an unstable life, of big economic instability, and nowadays they have an income ... their children are in schools ... they left the streets to go to a cooperative.

However, the account of capacity building 'as they go', reflects the fact that rhetorical policy commitments lack supportive formal structures for implementation, such as appropriate land tenure arrangements and the formal recognition of gardeners' cooperatives. Required, therefore, is a policy similar to *usucapião urbano* for those who make productive, yet non-domiciliary use of derelict or vacant urban space. *Usucapião urbano* (urban prescription) 'establishes the possibility of creating an uncontestable title of ownership for residents who have lived continuously for five years and without legitimate opposition on small lots of urban land' (Caldeira and Holston, 2005: 154). Thus, while urban agricultural land should remain public, the policy should secure land tenure for groups that carry out productive activities as organised associations or OSCIPs that are committed to urban agriculture. Security of tenure should also be accompanied by the guaranteed provision of much-needed services, such as a clean water supply. At the same time, recyclers' organisations struggle in a battle against unreliable support from local government, which places stress on the economic gains that can be derived from selective collection:

> The great challenge for the administrations is to decide between doing the service via the municipality ... or subcontracting ... I think that the debate here is that an economic reading is central. Why? Because ... there is no public administrator who does not worry about the question of budgets ... he will need to know what it can bring as a contribution to the budget ... convince the public administrator and say that if he practices this, then he will save money.

The above perspective reflects a disconnect between economic and social perspectives within government, as the mandate of increasing efficiency shrouds the social benefits that can be derived from IOWM, such as community-building, social cohesion, and enhanced environmental awareness. Rather than suppor-

ting the sociality of community-based initiatives, the increased political emphasis on self-evolving and self-organising civil solutions has fragmented the collective struggle for sustainable livelihoods that has been borne by informal recyclers and community gardeners. Indeed, representatives proclaimed that the municipality would have no problem in supporting IOWM, and that any barriers would be a result of individual moral failures preventing effective participation. Such hollow support for social participation, mobilisation, and organisation was illustrated by the lack of assistance provided to *Vida Limpa* prior to and following the fire at *Posto do Centro*, as well as by the insecurity of tenure afforded to community gardeners that has resulted in continuous community conflict. Moreover, the recent global economic crisis has detrimentally affected recycling organisations in the São Paulo region, which are struggling to cover costs and withstand exploitation by intermediaries. Despite this context, local governments have withdrawn, rather than offered, socio-economic support for recycling organisations, forcing many to abandon their activities. By not following through on their commitments (for example, through the ceasing of remuneration payments), the local government has undone the progress that had been made in presenting recycling organisations as environmental bastions. The result in Diadema was the destruction of recycling operations due to conflict with local residents, who perceived collection depots as dirty and associated those working in them with low social status. The government of Diadema failed to understand the complexity that underpins recycling organisations and urban agriculture, and the result of such complacency was violent conflict and deepened vulnerability. Complacency was compounded by political ineffectiveness, which accompanies the instability of election periods in Brazilian politics.[4] In the aftermath of the fire, the municipality still failed to support *Vida Limpa* adequately, as the *posto* struggled to re-establish collection activities without the necessary infrastructure and the recyclers remained vulnerable.

Connecting Civil with Political Society: Contested Spaces of Deliberation

According to Coelho and Favareto (2008: 2950) 'participatory governance processes actually conceive the role of marginalised actors as one of co-producers of public policies and co-generators of innovative development alternatives, principally at a local level'. In the Brazilian context, however, deliberation and public participation are encouraged but often not practically supported. Although informal recyclers' organisations are recognised, there are few formal structures to facilitate their participation in policy-making processes, and involvement is often confined to the meetings that are convened by projects such as PSWM. The result is an uneven space that remains dominated by formal political decision-making processes and existing hierarchies of power, thereby limiting the substantive participation of less powerful civil society actors. Members of *Vida Limpa* must continuously fight to have their concerns addressed, as they struggle to navigate the layered and bureaucratic nature of local government – only a handful of municipal representatives listen to the concerns of *Vida Limpa*, and responsibility is often deferred to other representatives. The result, according to a *Vida Limpa* representative, is a continuous fight against a rhetoric of 'it's going to be ok', which is rarely enforced with action. In attempting to arrange meetings to discuss the future of the *Vida Limpa* project in the forthcoming

political term (the mayor for which was yet to be decided), *Vida Limpa* experienced a lack of commitment from government, as municipal representatives repeatedly failed to attend. This presents a barrier to the effective drafting and implementation of plans that actively include recycling organisations, and *catadores* frequently vented their frustration at waste management decisions that had been made without their consultation. According to a *Vida Limpa* representative, the roots of political inaction and the lack of transparent and accountable decision-making are prejudice and dishonesty, epitomised by the perception that 'she is just a *catador*' and reinforcing unwillingness among intimidated *catadores* to express their concerns in an uneven decision-making terrain.

Thus, for *Vida Limpa* representatives, local government is characterised by hypocrisy and symbolic gestures, which are supported by dishonesty and inaction. Such inaction is exacerbated by the political instability that accompanies election periods, which makes public participation and civic mobilisation particularly draining. With every political term a municipal 'Master Plan' is drafted and implemented; municipal law supports the projects included in the plan, while those that are not included are left vulnerable to termination. Thus, at least every four years, civil society actors must pressure senior municipal representatives so that the *Vida Limpa* programme can continue to receive support. According to *Vida Limpa* representatives, such a process is unsustainable as not all members of recycling associations are mobilised to struggle through the uneven terrain of municipal decision-making. Members of *Vida Limpa* became so disenchanted with the turgidity of decision-making scenarios that representation was often delegated, which compromised *Vida Limpa*'s role in the pilot project due to sporadic and unreliable attendance by the delegates – a reflection of their intimidation within the deliberative sphere. To overcome this situation there is a need for long-term agreements and contracts which span political election periods and bind both the outgoing and incoming political parties and mayors. This requires continued political advocacy to ensure that remuneration and professional relations with recycling organisations are guaranteed features of the municipal plans. This will alleviate the burden of political campaigning that is currently borne by *Vida Limpa*, which is a drain on their limited capacity. Granting recycling organisations in Diadema the potential to acquire cooperative status can reinforce such professional relations and allow them to be incorporated systematically into municipal waste management plans rather than remain as a pool of cheap, under-remunerated labour.

Currently, however, the power relations between civil and political society remain unequal, which raises the question of whether traditional channels, such as round-table discussions and project meetings, can foster effective deliberative decision-making spaces. According to authors such as Cornwall (2007), the contestation within policy-influencing discussions between *Vida Limpa* and the municipality reflects the passionate, combative, and agonistic politics that defines true deliberative space. However, evidence from the pilot study in Diadema shows that where contestation fails to transform power relations, deliberative space merely serves to reproduce the power inequalities that perpetuate vulnerability and over-ride local institutions and community organisation. The story of *Vida Limpa*'s struggles illuminates the issue of contestation without transformation, as municipal representatives continue to ignore pleas for meetings and open discussion. As the

Vida Limpa representative retreated from the everyday activities of the organisation, little had changed as municipal representatives continued to promise that 'it's going to be ok', despite the continued lack of remuneration.[5] If *Vida Limpa* representatives continue to be silenced, the extent to which they are *equal* co-producers of policies, as Coelho and Favareto (2008) would argue, is debatable. Local government has used the *Vida Limpa* case to promote itself as a model socially-oriented municipality, as *Vida Limpa* has made significant contributions to policy advances. However, the limited form of negotiation experienced by the organisation's representatives reinforces existing asymmetries of power and leaves everyday deliberative space open to the form of elite capture described by Dasgupta and Beard (2007). Thus, deliberative 'add-ons', as Schönleitner (2004) puts it, associated with symbolic rather than substantive participation are incapable of resolving inherently asymmetrical power geometries or producing the social control that is required (Vieira, 2008).

V. Conclusion: Moving Policy Reform Forward

Recyclers and community gardeners in Diadema remain vulnerable and marginalised. The drafting, implementation, and consistent and active enforcement of supportive policies is required if livelihoods based on waste-as-a-resource are to be sustainable and viable. Municipalities need to integrate inclusive recycling programmes actively into municipal models of waste management, and the relationship with recyclers must be based on professional relations rather than paternalism. Required, therefore, is horizontal and vertical cooperation among government agencies, the community, the public, and the private sector (Gutberlet, 2008b). A first step towards a more supportive policy environment for IOWM involves the establishment of a firm policy of remuneration for the collection of organic waste, for which municipal representatives expressed an interest. As a representative from *Abastecimento Público* explained, 'this has already been developed here in Diadema, because there is a law that assures that recyclers get paid for the [inorganic] solid waste collection. It would be just to add this law to the organic waste collection. I don't see any problem with it'. The establishment and *active enforcement* of such a policy would provide the security required in the short-term to establish IOWM, as it would help to prevent the exploitation of *catadores* and community gardeners as unpaid labourers. The policy would also economically empower the *catadores* by reducing their dependency on market intermediaries.

Community gardeners, meanwhile, are encouraged to self-organise and lack tangible institutional support. Community gardeners also suffer from extreme insecurity of tenure, and a policy similar to *usucapião urbano* is required for organised groups that make productive, yet non-domiciliary use of derelict or vacant urban space. In Diadema, the local government has implanted UA in the hope that it will contribute to enhanced food security in line with *Fome Zero* policy ambitions. Yet without institutional support and environmental education to stimulate social engagement, and without legal measures to reduce vulnerability, urban agriculture and its role in IOWM will remain an *ad hoc*, safety net phenomenon practiced at the fringes of the political, social, and economic realms.

The difficulty now lies in converting rhetorical support for IOWM and legal measures into firm political action. At the very least, a paradigm shift is required to

go beyond the *negative* conception of non-waste in landfill to recognise the *positive* value of waste-as-a-resource for livelihood sustainability. Research into the economic viability of community-based enterprise based on composting household waste is desperately required to support such a shift; many municipal representatives remain unaware that compost possesses any economic value at all. To help forge these conceptual and practical shifts in government, there is also a need for deeper institutional inclusion to help establish community-based organisations that can initiate dialogue with government. Institutional links between recyclers and community gardeners can bridge their livelihood strategies, and help to increase their autonomy and influence in decision-making. The institutional links need to be formally recognised and actively developed to address the needs of IOWM, and so that deliberative decision-making can be built upon as an iterative process between the state and civil society (Lavalle, Acharya and Houtzager, 2005). Critical trust at the institutional level is necessary for broader social and political trust in IOWM to develop in tandem with a healthy scrutiny and rectification of uneven power dynamics and social inequality (Parkins and Mitchell, 2005). In this way, institutional coalitions for progressive socio-environmental policy reform can develop, placing social equality and environmental sustainability at the heart of substantive public participation in decision-making processes.

Ironically, the current political and economic climate opens the doors for recyclers and community gardeners to assert their needs in the political realm. For this to be more than a rhetorical exercise, recyclers need to be supported in building institutional and social alliances in order to take control of waste diversion. As Hochstetler and Friedman (2008) point out, political crisis triggers a shift from traditional to new modes of representation, civil society organisations (CSOs) such as recycling organisations are becoming increasingly important in promoting the interests of a Latin American civil society that is attempting to introduce alternative political practices and new institutional formats. While CSOs cannot, and are not seeking to, replace traditional forms of political representation, they are looking to deepen the democracy of every-day deliberative processes and are providing citizens with new modes of representation that are capable of influencing political outcomes (Hochstetler and Friedman, 2008). Thus, the current economic crisis reflects a common Brazilian idiom that was voiced during an interview with a municipal representative: 'you will cover one saint, and uncover another'. As inequality continues to deepen in a time of economic hardship, the door opens for organised groups of marginalised citizens to put forward their models of more equitable and sustainable livelihoods.

Diadema, then, is becoming an important focal point for a politics of enhancing livelihoods and improving urban environments in Brazil. Civil society actors, such as recyclers and urban gardeners, are mobilising to take control of their local environment, and imputes exists within the municipality to support these ventures. While work remains to be done in terms of converting policy rhetoric into practice, Diadema represents a progressive political scenario in Brazil, providing opportunities for participation and political change. The support within local government for integrated organic waste management reflects the positive political climate for designing fair policies on organised selective waste collection. In March 2010, the federal government approved amendments to the National Policy on Solid Waste

(*Lei 203/91 Política Nacional de Resíduos Sólidos*), and the law now integrates the technological, economic, cultural, social, and environmental variables of waste management into a coherent policy framework that will facilitate the national implementation of strategies that have been successful in Diadema. The support for IOWM in Diadema is a first step towards more sustainable and inclusive waste management, and the new national law on waste management will provide the means for turning such support onto political practice.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Organic waste is defined here as food waste suitable for transformation into agricultural fertiliser. This builds on ecological definitions of organic as matter based on carbon and nitrogen bonds, rather than on popular definitions of organic as a categorisation of naturally produced food.
2. Participatory Sustainable Waste Management is a University Partnership in Cooperation and Development project, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) (2005–2011). Through capacity building, the PSWM project helps Brazilian recycling cooperatives to increase the effectiveness and safety of the collection and processing of recyclable materials for commercialisation. The project contributes to increased awareness among governments and communities about waste co-management issues and the reduction of waste, instigating inclusive waste management policy-making.
3. The Workers' Party was established in 1980 and has held power in Diadema since then, despite internal political rifts in the municipality. In 2002, president Lula – a former metal worker and co-founder of the PT – was elected as President, signifying the strength of the party and the country's official transition to democracy (French and Fortes, 2005; Samuels, 2008). PT policies are characterised by bottom-up political action, public participation, and the inclusion of other leftist groups. The PT is distinctive as it owes its origins to the emergence of leadership from the new configuration of the Brazilian working class – the New Unionism that emerged during the 1970s (French and Fortes, 2005).
4. Political instability refers not to a particular risk of political coup, but to the poorly developed institutional frameworks to cope with the unstable transitions between political terms (whether or not the transition results in a change of government).
5. After a lengthy spell of absence, the *Vida Limpa* representative has recently returned to the fold with renewed energy to participate in government negotiations and combat the unequal relationships that perpetuate the marginalisation of recyclers.

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